Booker T. Washington

Born in Virginia in the mid-to-late 1850s, Booker T. Washington put himself through school and became a teacher. In 1881, he founded the Tuskegee Normal and Industrial Institute in Alabama (now known as Tuskegee University), which grew immensely and focused on training African Americans in agricultural pursuits. A political adviser and writer, Washington clashed with intellectual[W.E.B. Du Bois](http://www.biography.com/people/web-du-bois-9279924) over the best avenues for racial uplift.

Two great leaders of the black community in the late 19th and 20th century were W.E.B. Du Bois and Booker T. Washington. However, they sharply disagreed on strategies for black social and economic progress. Their opposing philosophies can be found in much of today's discussions over how to end class and racial injustice, what is the role of black leadership, and what do the 'haves' owe the 'have-nots' in the black community.

Booker T. Washington, educator, reformer and the most influentional black leader of his time (1856-1915) preached a philosophy of self-help, racial solidarity and accomodation. He urged blacks to accept discrimination for the time being and concentrate on elevating themselves through hard work and material prosperity. He believed in education in the crafts, industrial and farming skills and the cultivation of the virtues of patience, enterprise and thrift. This, he said, would win the respect of whites and lead to African Americans being fully accepted as citizens and integrated into all strata of society.